

Matthew Chapter 13 v 24 - 46

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[0 : 00] We're breaking into a passage where Jesus is speaking to vast crowds, and he's speaking to them using parables.

Verse 24, Jesus told them another parable, The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field, but while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away.

When the wheat sprouted and formed ears, then the weeds also appeared. The owner's servants came to him and said, Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?

An enemy did this, he replied. The servants asked him, Do you want us to go and pull them up? No, he answered, because while you are pulling up the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest. And at that time, I will tell the harvesters, First collect the weeds and then tie them in bundles to be burnt, and then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.

[1 : 15] He told them another parable, The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it's the smallest of all your seeds, yet when it grows, it's the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and perch in its branches.

He told them still another parable, The kingdom of heaven is like yeast, that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour, until it worked all through the dough.

Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd in parables. He didn't say anything to them without using a parable. So it was fulfilled what was spoken through the prophet, I will open my mouth in parables, our letter of things hidden since the creation of the world.

Then he left the crowd and went into the house. His disciples came to him and said, Explain the parable of the weeds in the field. He answered, The one who sowed the good seed is the son of man.

The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is at the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels.

[2 : 47] As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so will it be at the end of this age. At the end of the age, the son of man will send out his angels, and they'll weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil.

They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their father.

He who has ears, let him hear. The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field.

When a man found it, he hid it again, and then, in his joy, went and sold all he had and bought that field.

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.

[4 : 02] Now, a little bit later on, we'll look at those few verses there at the end. But in the meanwhile, I wonder if there are any children remaining. Send a school teacher, if they'd like to. Go out at this point, please.

Go out at this point, please. What's the most precious, important thing in your life?

What's the most valuable possession that you have? Now, it's not necessarily an easy thing to answer, but one way in which you could answer it is like this.

Just over a year ago, in fact, round about a year ago, there were very serious floods in the south and west of England. Particularly badly hit was the Somerset levels and people had to abandon their houses.

Now, imagine that you were there at that time and you were told you've got to get out now. Is there anything that you would really want to take with you as you left your house?

[5 : 13] So, what is most, most precious to you? What do you treasure the most? In Matthew's Gospel, chapter 13, verse 44, we read the words of the Lord Jesus Christ.

He said this, Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field which a man found and hid and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

And again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls who, when he'd found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it.

Now, what is absolutely clear about those parables is that they're saying the same thing, that the kingdom of heaven is of great value, like treasure, like an amazing pearl, better than all the other pearls that you could possibly come across.

Now, if you had a metal detector and went out in the fields or moors and suddenly found it responding to some metal, you get your trowel out and dig and delve a bit and if you found some gold coins, you'd get very, very excited, wouldn't you?

[6 : 49] Well, the kingdom of heaven is like that when you find it. If you had a letter in the post this week and it said that your pension had increased or you got an unexpected rise in your salary or an increased allowance, you'd be delighted.

And of course, such things do change our lives. and we should be grateful for anything that makes life easier or enjoyable. It's a gift from God.

We should be thankful for it. But here, we're on an entirely different plane. Discovering the kingdom of heaven and its secrets has eternal, has everlasting consequences.

consequences. The consequences go beyond this life, beyond all the other things that we treasure. And so the challenge of these verses is surely this, have you put the same value on the kingdom of heaven as Jesus does?

So, how valuable is the kingdom of heaven to the Lord? Well, you realize, of course, that the kingdom of heaven is just another name for the church, the people belonging to the Lord Jesus Christ.

[8 : 15] How much is the church worth to the Lord? Paul, writing to the Ephesians, reminds us that Christ loved the church and gave himself for it.

the Lord of glory came into this world, took our flesh and blood and gave his life up as a sacrifice to pay for the guilt of each member of his church across the world and down through history.

That's how valuable the Lord, the Lord Jesus Christ looks upon his church. He redeemed us or rescued us for his own pleasure, his own delight, not for time alone, but for eternity.

He came to save sinners and save them to the uttermost. That's the value he put upon the church. And if you're part of that church, that's how valuable the Lord Jesus Christ looks upon you.

How did you enter that kingdom? Well, he might have been like a man stumbling across the treasure in the field. Perhaps he is working the soil and there it was, it suddenly appeared to him.

[9 : 40] You can imagine him looking this way and that way to see if anyone was looking and he quickly covered that treasure up and did everything that was necessary to secure that treasure for himself.

Occasionally, you find a man who finds a Christian leaflet on his doormat or sees a text on a poster outside a church building and they realize for the first time there is such a thing as everlasting life and hope for eternity because the leaflet or the poster speaks about Jesus Christ risen from the dead and having been seen by many witnesses.

witnesses. And the person says, ah, there is hope in this dark world, this world so full of hopelessness and despair, there's hope, there's everlasting hope because Christ was raised from the dead.

And the person merely stumbled across a leaflet on the mat or merely glanced at a text outside a church building. Sometimes a person starts a casual conversation with a friend or a colleague at work or at a club and the conversation takes a surprising turn and the friend speaks about the gospel of Jesus Christ and the need to have a living relationship with him.

The friend speaks about Jesus being crucified, suffering, dying to pay the price of sin. Not his own sin, of course, but the sin of you and me.

[11 : 31] The conversation just came from nowhere. And perhaps you were just like that. You're like one of those people. You just stumbled across the truth. You weren't particularly looking, but then all of a sudden you heard, you understood that God loved you.

That he loved you so much as to send his one and only son into the world to die upon a cross taking the punishment that you deserved.

And that he was raised from the dead and forever lives to bring you to everlasting glory. And that was precious news to you.

It came out of the blue to you. It was treasure to you. And you gladly gave your life to him to guide you and to rule over you.

You just stumbled across it. And once we all served our selfish desires, we were without God in this world.

[12 : 38] And we had no intention of changing our godless ways. We had no hope beyond the uncertain length of our present lives. And we lived in unbelief and darkness.

But on hearing the gospel, it was as though someone switched on a light and we saw there was hope because Jesus was raised from the dead.

And our wrong thoughts, our desires and feelings and words and actions could be forgiven through him. The light came on and we discovered the free treasures of the kingdom of God.

And we were transferred from the kingdom of darkness and Satan to the everlasting kingdom of God. Now have you got that hope?

It's built of course on the truthfulness and faithfulness and power of God. There's nothing like it, nothing to compare with it. There's an awful lot of bad news around.

[13 : 41] But this is good news. It's eternally good news. Now did you stumble across this news, this treasure, like the man in the field?

Well maybe you didn't stumble across the kingdom of God in this sort of way at all. Perhaps you are always very religious. You love to discuss religious ideas and talk about religion and churches.

You love to go to church to sing hymns. You enjoy the peace, the atmosphere, the company.

However, you actually wanted to have something bigger and better than this, a better experience, a more richer experience than this, because at the bottom of your heart, you knew you weren't entirely satisfied by the atmosphere, the music, the fine sermons, the dressing up perhaps.

when you looked at the power and the vitality of the early church in the New Testament, you realised that something certainly was lacking in your Christianity.

So you searched. Perhaps you met a person who radiated the life that you didn't have. He or she knew the Lord and walked with the Lord and you didn't.

[15 : 13] So you searched for the secret that that person had. You searched the scriptures and you found Jesus who has the words of eternal life.

The Bible suddenly became a living word to you, sweet to your taste, because it spoke of Christ and his love, his faithfulness.

The hymns that you sang before took on a new reality that you never realised. The preaching of the gospel of Christ and him crucified had a relevance and a power that was unknown to you before.

And you longed that others might know the same Lord Jesus that thrilled your soul. You were full with praise in your heart and realised that somehow everything that you once had was of very little worth.

And you can identify with a merchant who dealt with pearls, but then came across something that was so much more wonderful, the pearl of greatest price.

[16 : 29] Christ. So is there anything that you value more than Christ? Paul said that all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are found in him.

There were lots of things that Paul valued in his earlier life when he was usually known as Saul of Tarsus. Listen to the things that he once trusted in, those things that he valued, those things that he thought were important about himself.

Here's his testimony, his story. He said this, Circumcised the eighth day of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, concerning the law, a Pharisee, concerning zeal, persecuting the church, concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

In his view, he cut such a fine figure. He had such a fine pedigree. He had an excellent education, taught by the renowned scholar Gamaliel.

He was a respected Pharisee. He kept the law, the teaching of the Pharisees perfectly. At least that's what he said. He wasn't half-hearted about his religious zeal.

[17 : 46] It even caused him to try and stamp out this new teaching that he came across about Jesus Christ. One time he valued his upbringing. His education and his obedience to what he saw as the law of God.

He felt that if anyone deserved God's favour, it would be him. But listen to how he went on. Listen to what else he had to say. He said this, but whatever was to my profit, I now consider loss for the sake of Christ.

What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I've lost all things.

I count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ.

The righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. He discovered something much more valuable than his form of religion.

[19 : 01] He was just like the merchant of pearls, who discovered a wonderful pearl, such a wonderful pearl, that he sold everything else. Paul despised his former zeal and his own works of righteousness.

He no longer trusted in his birth, his religious education, his nationality, his religious practices, his zeal, and called them rubbish.

Paul was so decisive. He knew Christ. He rejoiced in his righteousness alone. Paul counted his own righteousness as done or refuse.

He knew that salvation was in Christ alone, by faith alone, through the kindness and grace of God alone.

Anything else was worthless compared to this. Now, have you discovered the treasure that Paul found?

[20 : 11] Have you stumbled across the treasure that Jesus spoke of? Paul had clearly rejected all the other things that he possessed, that he may have Christ.

The gospel had gripped him, controlled him. He received new motivation from that gospel, that Christ loved him and gave himself for him.

It turned his life around, and everything he did, he did in order to please the Lord, his righteousness, and he wanted to share that knowledge with others.

And Paul spoke about that gospel, the gospel concerning Jesus Christ as being treasure.

In 2 Corinthians chapter 4 verse 7, for example, Paul said this, we have this treasure in earth and vessels. He knew his own frailty and described himself as a ceramic vessel, a piece of pottery that could so easily be broken, but one that had precious contents.

[21 : 27] Not everyone recognized the value of his message. Not everyone understood it. Not everyone was convinced of its timeless relevance.

Not everyone appreciated his gospel as being the everlasting gospel of God. God and of course it's the same today.

Some of Paul's heroes just couldn't see it. No matter how hard, no matter how skillfully, no matter how carefully Paul tried to persuade them to trust in Christ.

They simply failed to see that Christ is sufficient to get them to heaven. Paul wrote, if our gospel is failed, it is failed to those who are perishing.

And then followed with a statement that's quite shocking. whose minds the God of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.

[22 : 55] Those are very serious words. If you've heard the gospel of God's kingdom time and time again and have rejected it, do you realize how serious your spiritual condition is?

Matthew 13 is filled with parables that Jesus spoke. Look at verse 2. We didn't read this earlier, but you can turn to it now. He told them many things in parables, they didn't understand.

And in verse 10, the disciples came and said to him, why do you speak to the people in parables? He replied, the knowledge of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them.

And then he went on to quote from Isaiah chapter 6. Those seeing, they do not see, though hearing, they do not hear or understand.

If you read through that passage, read through the parables, you see quite clearly there are two classes of people. Those who hear and see, and those who are deaf and blind to the gospel.

[24 : 23] The parables are spoken to young and old, rich and poor, very religious, not so religious, and yet they would divide it into two types of listener.

Those who had ears to hear and those who did not. Matthew 13, 42, which we did read, the son of man will send out his angels and they'll weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil.

they will throw them into the fiery furnace where there be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun and the kingdom of their father.

He who has ears to hear, let him hear. The parables of the kingdom are about hearing and seeing, deafness and blindness.

They concern judgment and glory. They confirm the division of men into two, those with hard hearts and those with new hearts.

[25 : 40] Last week from this pulpit we were reminded of Pharaoh. Pharaoh had a hard heart. Remember how Exodus tells us that his heart became harder.

he heard the words of Moses but he didn't hear. He saw the miracles that accompanied Moses but didn't see.

And many of the people who listened to Jesus were just like that. They didn't have eyes to see the treasure. They hadn't got a clue what he was talking about.

So have you got a hard heart or a new heart? Have you got ears that hear and eyes that see?

The gospel is good news from heaven to earth. News of peace and goodwill towards men. And by it you're saved if you hold it to the end.

[26 : 55] But in this life there are still trials, disappointments, sorrows, losses, troubles of various sorts. They're all a result of living in a fallen world that's heading for judgment.

How can you face those things? How do you face those things? for there's not anyone here who doesn't experience trials of one sort or another, sometimes absolutely devastating.

And then what about eternal judgment? How can you face that? Now we can face these things by knowing that we have the treasure of salvation, the pearl of wisdom, the riches of belonging to a kingdom that never ends.

You and I can face a world that's falling apart by rejoicing in the salvation that's ours. The Old Testament prophet Habakkuk saw judgment coming upon his people in Jerusalem through the Babylonian empire that swept everything before it and he knew that that would involve him in personal loss too.

He was part of a world that's being judged. Listen to his response. Habakkuk chapter 3 and verse 17. Though the fig tree does not bud and though there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there's no sheep in the pen, no cattle in the stalls, yet, I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in the God of my salvation.

[28 : 55] Now, is that how you face those trials and troubles and disappointments that sweep across you from time to time? Habakkuk and Paul had found the pearl of greatest price.

they had immense riches in the God of their salvation. So, how have you? Do you face trouble, trial, ultimate judgment, and do you face it with the Lord as your Savior, the Lord Jesus standing by you? Is he your confidence in a dark world which is undergoing all those judgments which lead to the final and ultimate judgment when we'll all appear before the judgment seat of Christ?

Do you face these things with Christ as your Savior, the one who died for you? He's the one who judges the world. Now, is he your Savior, your confidence?

Is he the Lord, your righteousness? others may have eyes that do not see and ears that do not hear, but if you're a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, you have all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge in him.

[30 : 25] But what if you don't see and you don't hear? What if you don't understand? What if your heart is hard? you must come to the Lord Jesus Christ and call on him.

Just think about him. Think how he went around doing good and in particular there was no one he ever turned away. No one who was physically blind or deaf was turned away and is the same yesterday, today and forever and he will not turn you away if you come to him and say, please, give

me a new heart, please give me eyes that see, please give me ears that hear.

He said, all that come to me I will in no eyes cast out. So ask him to give you that spiritual sight and healing so you can see the glory of the gospel, the riches of Christ, the pearl of greatest price.

now if you're in the kingdom of God, how much value do you put on it? On Sunday mornings we've been looking at Moses.

Remember Moses? He was a prince in Egypt, but that wasn't where he belonged. He was actually a member of the poor despised Hebrews, mere slaves at the time.

[31 : 58] Listen to how the faith of Moses is described by the writer to the Hebrews, Hebrews 11 24. By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt.

Moses didn't see things as clearly as you and I do. He didn't have all the scriptures that we have, but he esteemed the reproach of Christ, greater riches than the treasures in Egypt.

He saw Christ much more dimly than we do, yet Moses identified himself with Christ and his people. Moses was tested in that he chose Christ and his suffering, weak, despised people rather than Pharaoh and the riches and the wisdom of Egypt.

He turned his back on the wisdom and social standard that he did have and fully identified himself with the people of promise. he turned his back on the things that could be seen to choose the unseen.

He was prepared to brave the fury of Pharaoh that he might enjoy living with the slaves of Egypt and serving the Hebrews, those who were mere slaves.

[33 : 46] Now you might say, Christ is precious to you. that he's your treasure, your pearl of greatest price. And of course, that's very good.

But how precious is his people to you? How closely do you identify with them? You love the king, but do you love the kingdom?

Do you treasure the king and his kingdom? it cost Moses a great deal to be fully identified with the people of Israel?

Does your commitment to the church cost you anything? Are you fully committed to the church?

Are you fully identify? do you fully identify with the people of God, the people of that kingdom?

There's a cost.

[34 : 57] Jesus said, if anyone desires to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul?

Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? What serious words. Do you value the king and his kingdom?

Let's pray. Amen. Gracious God, we thank you for all the blessings that we have in the Lord Jesus Christ.

We thank you for him. We thank you that he has a people here in this world and that you have drawn us together into one body.

[36 : 10] We pray that you will help us to serve each other and to serve our Lord Jesus Christ as your people here in this world.

And we ask it in his name and for his glory. Amen.